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Resource mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Statement submitted by the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative relationship with the United Nations and the World Federation of United Nations Associations, non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council on the recommendations made at an NGO/civil society forum held on 18 March 2004

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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The present report includes recommendations to eradicate poverty in the LDCs from the first NGO/Civil Society Forum and Panel held in New York on 18 March 2004. This Forum was jointly sponsored by UNDESA NGO Section, OHRLLS, CONGO, WFUNA and the LDC Watch. Participants included about 150 NGOs as well as some representatives of Governments and business community. Through this report recommendations by civil society from the perspective of its unique community based and grassroot level experience would be submitted for consideration by Governments at the ministerial High Level Segment of ECOSOC on 38-30 June 2004. The theme of the High Level Segment this year is "Resources Mobilization and Enabling Environment for Poverty Eradication in the context of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs".

The Preparatory NGO/Civil Society Forum and Panel for the High Level Segment of ECOSOC held a meeting in New York on 18 March 2004 to prepare its contribution to the ECOSOC 2004 theme: "Resource Mobilization and Enabling Environment for Poverty Eradication in the context of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2004". It was jointly organized by the UNDESA NGO Section, the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA), Conference of NGOs (CONGO) and the LDC Watch. UN officials, about 150 NGOs and representatives from the business community participated in the meeting. The panelists represented NGOs from both developed and developing countries, including LDCs. Some delegates representing members of ECOSOC also attended the Forum as observers. Most notable among them were the current chairman of the LDCs the Foreign Minister of Benin, Mr. Rogatien Biaou, the Chairman of the G77 and Mr. Richard Ryan, the Permanent Representative of Ireland as the current President of the European Union. Their presence indicated the importance they attach to the contribution of NGOs to the work of ECOSOC.

This is the first time an NGO/Civil Society Forum has been organized as one of series of steps to more effectively include the unique perspective of NGOs into the work of the High Level Segment of ECOSOC aimed at improving collaboration between Governments, UN system and civil society. Other steps include the establishment of the UNDESA IRENE network – regional networks of NGOs around the world.

The Forum was addressed by the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Marjatta Rasi, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, UN Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the LDC, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries, Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary General in UNDESA and Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Director UNDESA. Their statements highlighted the importance and necessity of the contribution of NGOs to the work of inter-Governmental bodies such as ECOSOC and the need to improve systems and structures that would channel this contribution in an organized manner into the work of ECOSOC. It was pointed out that this Forum was one such

effort in a series of steps to ensure closer interaction between the NGOs as the voice of people at the grassroots level and Governments in their deliberations in ECOSOC. In this context several concrete recommendations were made by different speakers. They also acknowledged the unique role of the NGOs in promoting development at the grassroots level and their global advocacy role at the international level on issues that are of particular concern to the LDCs such as resource mobilization.

A report highlighting the activities in LDCs of 135 NGOs from 46 countries based on a survey conducted by the UN DESA NGO Section in cooperation with CONGO and WFUNA was submitted to the NGO/Civil Society Forum to facilitate discussion. On the basis of a questionnaire the NGOs provided examples of their success stories and concrete recommendations on eradicating poverty and achieving other relevant Millennium Development Goals. During discussions at the Forum participants shared their experiences and perspectives on how to develop a successful fund raising strategy in order to strengthen the NGO/Civil Society General Voluntary Trust Fund with the aim of promoting and implementing pilot partnership initiatives, projects and programmes between NGOs, corporate sector, Governments and the UN system to eradicate poverty in the LDCs. The recommendations by the NGO/Civil Society Forum are contained in this report for submission to the President of ECOSOC for consideration in drafting the Ministerial Declaration of the High Level Segment of ECOSOC to be held on 28-30 June 2004.

I. *Fostering a people-centered policy framework*

- Increase civil society organizations' efforts to establish or expand participatory decision-making processes and policies. A necessary component of this action is long-term capacity building in education and skills training. Capacity building activities at the grass-roots level will improve poor people's ability to participate effectively in the political process and empower them to become full stakeholders in their own development;
- Promote cross-sector partnerships between public, private and civil society organizations that aim toward a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction and sustainable development in line with Millennium Development Goal 8;
- Promote demilitarisation and reallocation of budget resources to human development and establish and reinforce a culture of peace through mandatory peace education in school curricula
- Maintain awareness of the social and cultural dimensions of LDCs – take the local context of each country into account when developing policies and programmes;

II. *Good governance at the national and international levels*

- Increase transparency and accountability at all levels of government – international, national and local;
- Promote a decentralized decision-making process that is inclusive of marginalized groups;
- Adopt a rights-based approach to development, whereby basic needs such as water, food, education, health and shelter are considered public rights – ensure that water, health, sanitation and electrical services are affordable to all citizens;
- Develop broad-based support from within and outside the LDCs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in these countries. The committed support of NGOs and civil society

organizations, both nationally and internationally, will be a crucial factor toward achieving the MDGs in the LDCs.

III. *Building human and institutional capacities*

- Ensure the participation of women in decision-making processes that affect their lives and the development of the country through empowerment of women and gender equality as encouraged by Millennium Development Goal 3;
- Ensure education for all, particularly at the primary level. Enhance inclusion of the girl child in education. Improve access to the formal labour market by developing job-oriented training;
- Seek greater commitment from developed countries on contributing resources, on an emergency basis, to control the further spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.
- Facilitate the establishment and development of information and communication technology in LDCs to enable poor people to participate in international markets;
- Focus particular attention on vulnerable groups: elderly, disabled and families with special needs and encourage stakeholders to take people with disabilities into account when reaching international agreements;

IV. *Building production capacities to make globalization work for LDCs*

- Increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to LDCs such that all development partner governments reach the ODA target of 0.7% of GDP. Current trends in allocation of ODA fall short of what is needed to meet the goals of the Brussels Plan of Action (BPOA);
- Implement land reforms to provide poor people access to land, including setting aside land for rural cooperatives. Address women's claims to land rights as individuals – not only via a male family member;
- Promote micro enterprise that supports local expertise. Promote adaptation of interest rates for small-scale businesses;

V. *Enhancing the role of trade in development*

- Enhance appropriate transportation systems so that small-scale farmers can reduce the cost of accessing markets;
- Promote removal of trade barriers to goods from LDCs and removal of agricultural subsidies to farmers in developed countries;
- Encourage corporate responsibility on the part of multinational companies that invest in developing countries;

VI. *Reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment*

- Raise provision of clean water, improved water management and sanitation to high priority status;
- Encourage environmental protection according to sustainable development principles, through enforcement of national and international legislation and with stronger implementation measures and fines
- Adopt legislation containing a 'polluter pays' clause for extracting a country's natural resources and mineral wealth;

- Support activities that help LDCs to adapt to climate change because LDCs will suffer the most from its impacts;

VII. *Mobilizing financial resources*

- Encourage cancellation of LDCs' external debt. Without debt cancellation the LDCs will not develop sufficiently to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Most of the income the LDCs generate is used to service debt. Following debt cancellation, income formerly devoted to debt service may be redirected to meeting health, education and basic needs of the poorest citizens;
- Encourage foreign direct investment that facilitates the development of infrastructure that is sustainable in developing countries.
- The private sector is important for encouraging people to work their way out of poverty. So multinational companies should take corporate responsibility for the countries in which they invest.